sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu svayam-bhagavan
tanhara padaravinde ananta pranama

Lord Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu is the Personality of Godhead Himself, and therefore I offer innumerable prostrations at His lotus feet.
(*Sri Caitanya-Caritamrta Adi-Lila, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Text 42*)

Excerpts from Sri Chaitanya His Life & Precepts 1896
By Bhaktivinode Thakur

The Life Of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

The object of this little book is to bring the holy life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and His precepts to the notice of the educated and religious people. Most of the books treating these subjects have hitherto been printed in the Bengali language. Hence, the life and precepts of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have scarcely passed beyond the boundaries of Bengal. A book has therefore been printed in Sanskrit type for circulation all over India. Our educated brethren of Europe and America have taken, of late, to the study of the Sanskrit language, and it is our belief that this booklet will go to their hands in a very short time. This book contains 104 verses with copious commentaries. It makes a succinct mention of all the anecdotes of the life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as related in the famous book *Chaitanya Charitamrta* by Krishna das Kaviraj Goswami. Verses 75 to 86 inclusive will give an outline of the precepts of that great personage, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. With a view to help our English-speaking readers in going through the book, we have here summarized in English the contents of the work.

His Appearance

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born in Mayapur in the town of Nadia, just after sunset on the evening of the 23rd Phalguna 1407 Sakabda, corresponding to February 18th, 1486 of the Christian Era. The moon was eclipsed at the time of His birth, and the people of Nadia were then engaged, as usual on such occasions, in bathing in the Bhagirathi (Ganges River) with loud cheers of "Haribol!" His father, Jagannath Misra, was a poor Brahmana (priest) of the Vaidic order, and His mother Sacidevi was a woman of ideal character. Both descended from Brahmana families originally residing in Sylhet. Mahaprabhu was a beautiful child, and the ladies of the town came to present Him with gifts. His mother's father, Pandit Nilambar Chakravarti, a renowned astrologer, foretold that the child would be a great personage in time, and he therefore gave Him the name Vishvambar. The ladies of the neighborhood called Him Gaurahari because of His golden complexion, and His mother called Him Nimai because there was a neem tree near the place where He was born. The boy was very beautiful and everyone loved to see him every day. As He grew up He became a mischievous and frolicsome lad. After His fifth year He was admitted into a school where He mastered the Bengali language in a very short time.

The Precepts Of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

"Give up the shackles of material life slowly. Cultivate your spiritual consciousness internally. Give up prejudices that you have acquired from the so-called rational thinkers who deny the existence of spirit. Be humble and learn to respect those who work toward spiritual attainments..."

Lord Chaitanya teaches us first that the rational attributes of people are not capable of approaching the divine sphere of spirit. He considers reason to be quite incompetent in such a matter. However, He considers that the religious sentiment in man, even in a very small quantity, does have the power to comprehend spirit. Inspiration coming down from the higher realm through purified and blessed souls has been exhibited in the form of the *Vedas*. The *Vedas*, together with their explanatory notes, the *Puranas*, are therefore the only evidence in matters of spirit, and are eternal in nature. Thus, Vedic truths should be accepted as the only truth in higher matters. Reason, while sincerely helping the inspired truth, may be accepted as auxiliary evidence. According to Lord Chaitanya, the *Vedas* teach us nine principal doctrines:

1. Hari (the Almighty) is one without a second.
2. He is always vested with infinite power.
3. He is an ocean of rasa (sweetness).
4. The soul is His vibhinnangsha, or separated part.
5. Certain souls are engrossed by prakriti, or His illusory energy.
6. Certain souls are released from the grasp of prakriti.
7. All spiritual and material phenomena are the achintya-bedabeda-prakash of Hari, the Almighty.
8. Bhakti is the only means of attaining the final objective of spiritual existence.
9. Krishna prema alone is the final object of spiritual existence.

Bhakti Is The Only Means

Cultivation of the friendly feelings for Krishna is performed in nine different ways:

1. Hearing of the spiritual name, form, attributes, and lila of Krishna.
2. Speaking about and singing the glories of all those.
3. Meditating on and remembering all those.
4. Serving His holy feet.
5. Worshiping.
6. Bowing down.
7. Doing all that pleases Him.
8. Developing friendship toward Him.
9. Complete surrender to Him.

Of all these processes, kirtan, or singing the name of Krishna, is the best.

Krishna Prema Is The Goal

The religion preached by Mahaprabhu is universal and non-sectarian. The most learned and the most ignorant are both entitled to embrace it. The learned people can accept it by studying the literatures left by the great *acharyas*. The ignorant can have the same privilege by simply chanting the name of the Lord and mixing in the company of pure Vaishnavas. The church of kirtan invites all classes of people, without distinction as to caste or clan, to engage in the highest cultivation of the spirit. This church, it appears, will extend all over the world, and take the place of all sectarian institutions which exclude "outsiders" from the precincts of the mosque, church, or temple.

If you are so inclined, after a study of these pages, to identify Sri Chaitanadeva as the Supreme Lord, we would beg you not to think that God has entered into the carnal coil like the fallen men. His supreme power can bring Him down to the material world with all His glory and attributes without being touched by the lower energy of maya. To believe otherwise would be to commit the sin of minimizing His true position.

We make no objection if the reader does not believe His miracles, as miracles alone never represent the Godhead. Demons like Ravana and others have also performed miracles, which do not prove that they were God. It is unlimited *prema* and its overwhelming influence which can be seen in no one other than God Himself. In conclusion, we leave it to our readers to decide how to view Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Vaishnavas have accepted Him as the Supreme Lord Krishna Himself. Others have regarded Him as a *bhakta-avatar* (a divine incarnation to distribute love of God). It is at the request of some Vaishnavas that we have composed the *Smarana Mangal* verses in the form of prayers for daily recitation at the time of worship. Those of you who are not prepared to accept them in that way may accept Nimai Pandit as a noble and holy teacher. That is all we want our readers to believe.

Noble readers! Pardon us for intruding on you with these pages. As servants of Sri Chaitanyadeva, it was our duty to propagate His supreme teachings and in doing a duty we are entitled to pardon for any trouble we may have given you. We are natives of Bengal and in couching our words in a foreign language we might have been liable to mistakes for which you will please forgive.

In conclusion, we beg to say that we should be glad to reply to any questions which our brethren would like to address to us on these important subjects. We feel great interest in trying to help our friends to seek the way to spiritual love.

The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of London (of which Bhaktivinode was a member) marked the historic occasion of this publication with the following words:

"This little volume will add to our knowledge of this remarkable reformer, and we express our thanks to Bhaktivinode for giving it to us in English, rather than in Bengali, in which language it must necessarily have remained a closed book to European students of the religious life of India."

(jaya) sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda
sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda
Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Edited by Bhakta John Jagannatha